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Tips for getting your pharmaceutical packaging and labelling translations right

Accurate, coherent packaging and labelling translations are crucial to pharmaceutical and medical device companies and their customers. From boxes to bottles, leaflets to promotional inserts, delivering clear, consistent packaging information across all target markets promotes safe and effective use of a product, and minimizes complaints and returns. What's more, packaging translations can make or break a brand's reputation and credibility.

With so much at stake, several factors can help you to get your packaging translations right... and to avoid classic pitfalls.

1. Think layout

If you plan to list several languages in the same place (like on an insert), consider the presentation and put yourself in the shoes of someone reading it. Too many languages could overwhelm users looking for information. Too few could restrict your target audience and/or make your project less cost-effective.

2. Plan well ahead

EU Centralized Procedures have very tight deadlines: the period between the issuance of the EMA's opinion and the due date for submission of approved product information in the relevant languages is a mere 5 days. In view of the short timeframe for finalization of the translations, start working well ahead of time with your trusted translation provider, in order to plan the linguistic stages of your Marketing Authorization Application.

3. Work with professionals

Your translation provider should fully understand your objectives, and have a proven track record in the pharmaceutical and medical devices industries. Ask for references and research potential partners carefully. Choose an [experienced, competent agency](#) that works exclusively with native linguists who have a background in the related field and industry.

Reputable translation providers will offer tried and tested processes, to ensure consistent quality and timely, cost-effective delivery for multiple languages. Regardless of the scale of your project, they'll work with you to meet your evolving requirements and implement quality control procedures at each stage: from analyzing the original text to reviewing the translations in text format and on packaging mock-ups. A trustworthy translation partner knows that a minor mistake could delay the approval and release of your product – and will go to great lengths to prevent this.

4. Stick to the standards

It's essential that linguists translating your packaging texts fully understand any regulatory standards that may apply. Translators and agencies with a proven background in your field and industry will know about mandatory QRD requirements, applicable MedDRA terminology and submission standards specific to your industry in different countries, as determined by relevant regulatory organizations such as the FDA and the EMA.

5. In tech we trust

Translation memory tools and cloud-based tech tools contribute to producing consistent, accurate and efficient translations. By “remembering” repeated terminology, they help prevent subjectivity and slip-ups that your company can't afford. An experienced, specialized translation provider will talk you through the tools it uses, and create project-specific glossaries and guidelines for its translators and clients.

Return to the source

Together, these factors can help you to get the best possible packaging translations for your product. Developing a solid relationship with your translation provider is central to achieve consistent results, including marketing, monitoring, and updating the translated versions.

Above all, remember that the best translations start with a solid base text, while errors in the original can travel the entire pipeline. Don't be afraid to reach out to your translation agency to help you perfect and review the original text.

Had a great or grating packaging translation experience? Tell us about it!

For more information connect with us at

